In any tabulation of opinions which the Commission may be pleased to make in guiding it to a decision in this matter, I request that I be listed as favoring the name *Thamnophis sirtalis* auctorum, sensu Stejneger and Barbour, 1943 ; and the name *Thamnophis sauritus* auctorum, sensu Stejneger and Barbour, 1943. I further request that this specific opinion be generalised as a vote in favor of the continuity principle in future problems of a similar nature which may be referred to the Commission for an official *Opinion*.

SUPPORT FOR DR. HERNDON G. DOWLING'S PROPOSAL FOR THE USE OF THE PLENARY POWERS TO SUPPRESS THE TRIVIAL NAME "SIRTALIS" LINNAEUS, 1758 (AS PUBLISHED IN THE COMBINATION "COLUBER SIRTALIS") (CLASS REPTILIA, ORDER SQUAMATA)

By JAY M. SAVAGE

(*Stanford University, Natural History Museum, Stanford, California, U.S.A.*)

(Commission's reference Z.N.(S.)433)

(Letter dated 10th January 1952)

I have just finished reading the discussion of the *Thamnophis sirtalis-ordinatus* nomenclatural problem as presented by Dr. Herndon G. Dowling in the latest part of *Copeia*. It is understood that the arguments presented by Dowling are to be considered by the Commission in conjunction with the proposal of Schmidt and Conant.

At this time I should like to put myself on record as favouring the solution of this nomenclatural tangle suggested by Dr. Dowling. Under the circumstances outlined by him in his discussion, the application of *T. ordinatus* to the common gartersnake of North America and the retention of *T. sauritus* for the ribbon snake seem most acceptable. The only bar to such an interpretation would lie in the reference which has caused previous workers to refrain from suggestion that a Linnean name might be set aside by the Commission. The conclusions of Schmidt and Conant on this subject are subject to the disadvantage of advocating that a name be associated with a species for which it was never intended and also necessitate the setting aside of a Linnean name.

Dr. Dowling's interpretation is further considered to be the most acceptable solution since it will remove any doubt as to the application of *T. sirtalis* to an American snake, all references being thus associated with the synonymy of either *T. ordinatus* or *T. sauritus*. His conclusions, it is believed, will result in less confusion than if those of Schmidt and Conant were adopted.

SUPPORT FOR THE PROPOSAL RELATING TO THE TRIVIAL NAME "SIRTALIS" LINNAEUS, 1758 (AS PUBLISHED IN THE COMBINATION "COLUBER SIRTALIS") (CLASS REPTILIA) SUBMITTED BY DR. HERNDON G. DOWLING

By HOBART M. SMITH

(*University of Illinois, Department of Zoology, Urbana, Illinois, U.S.A.*)

(Commission's reference Z.N.(S.)433)

(Letter dated 23rd January 1952)

I should like to record with you my strong approval of the alternative procedure suggested by Dr. H. G. Dowling, modifying the proposals by Schmidt and Conant (1951, *Bull. zool. Nomencl.*, 2(3) : 67–69) relative to *Coluber sirtalis* Linnaeus.

Schmidt and Conant's proposal would require association of the specific trivial name ***sirtalis*** with a species that the type certainly did not represent. Names have often been suppressed in the past by the Commission for reasons contributing to clarity and stability of nomenclature but, rarely, if ever, has approval been granted for certainly erroneous application of a name to a species. It may perhaps be questioned whether the plenary powers of the Commission encompass decisions on matters so obviously zoological as this. In any event, there has been in the past a commendable reluctance by the Commission to deal with any, except strictly parliamentary (as opposed to zoological), problems. Only in most extraordinary circumstances would an exception to this policy be justified. The present case does not thus qualify. The species involved are not commonly dealt with outside of systematic herpetological literature, despite the fact that they are among the most common and widely distributed species of snakes of the country. Therefore, on grounds of precedent for action requested of the Commission, Dowling's proposal is preferable.

If ***sirtalis*** is retained as requested by Schmidt and Conant, admittedly in the course of a few years, workers will become correctly confident of the intent of contemporary usage. Never, however, as pointed out by Dowling, can the intent of usage of that name in the interim period (between 1948 and that future time when ***sirtalis*** shall have become of universally accepted application) be certain in all cases. The longer the name ***sirtalis*** is retained, whether approved by the Commission or not, the longer this interim period of confusion will be. Obviously, the mere existence of the name ***sirtalis*** in future literature will contribute to confusion for a number of years to come. Immediate and " Official " (i.e., by action of the Commission) discard of the name will greatly reduce the length of period of confusion. Thus, on grounds of clarity, as well as of precedent, Dowling's proposal is preferable.

The many expressions of opinion favouring Schmidt and Conant's proposal should not, of course, bear significant weight in guiding the Commission's decision, since Dowling's alternative had not then received attention. My own preference, formerly stated to be for retention of Klauber's solution, is here rescinded, and a vote is recorded instead for Dowling's proposal.

RENEWED SUPPORT FOR THE PROPOSAL RELATING TO THE TRIVIAL NAME " SIRTALIS " LINNAEUS, 1758 (AS PUBLISHED IN THE COMBINATION " COLUBER SIRTALIS ") (CLASS REPTILIA) SUBMITTED BY DR. KARL P. SCHMIDT AND MR. ROGER CONANT

COLEMAN J. GOIN

(*University of Florida, College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Biology, Gainesville, Florida, U.S.A.*)

(Commission's reference Z.N.(S.)433)

(Letter dated 11th March 1952)

Since I affirmed my position in favor of the petition submitted to the Commission by Karl P. Schmidt and Roger Conant (Commission's reference Z.N.(S.)433, Mr. Herndon Dowling has made a subsequent proposal to suppress the trivial name *sirtalis*.

As the Garter Snake is perhaps the best known snake in the eastern United States and as it has been known as *sirtalis* for over a hundred years, I think it would be exceedingly unwise to change its name. I am therefore writing to re-iterate my stand in favor of the proposal by Schmidt and Conant. I am not in favor of the proposal by Dowling.